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103

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
15 June 1966

ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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15 June 1966

HIGHLIGHTS

A rash of minor demonstrations continued in Saigon on 15 June. Police again broke them up before they acquired any momentum.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Heavy casualties inflicted on the PAVN 24th Regiment in Operation HAWTHORNE may put the 24th out of action for two months (Para. 2). MACV reports Operations HOOKER and REVERE may have succeeded in driving the PAVN 630th Division back into Cambodian territory (Para. 3). B-52 Stratofortresses strike suspected enemy concentrations in Quang Tin Province (Para. 5). ROK Marines begin Operation LONGSTREET II to clear parts of Route 1 (Para. 6). Press reports indicate a successful ARVN raid on a VC logistics base near Cambodian border (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Police for the third straight day broke up a rash of minor Buddhist demonstrations in Saigon today and detained several pro-"struggle" students staging a rally at Saigon University (Paras. 1-2). A Buddhist Institute monk has indicated that the present agitation has Institute approval, but could shed little light on the current status of moderate Institute chairman Tam Chau (Paras. 4-5). In Hue, Tri Quang is continuing his hunger strike, and a public protest hunger strike was partially effective today (Paras. 5-6). An official of the ruling Directorate has outlined to the press various government changes in the draft electoral decrees, expected to be promulgated on 19 June (Paras. 6-10).

III. Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

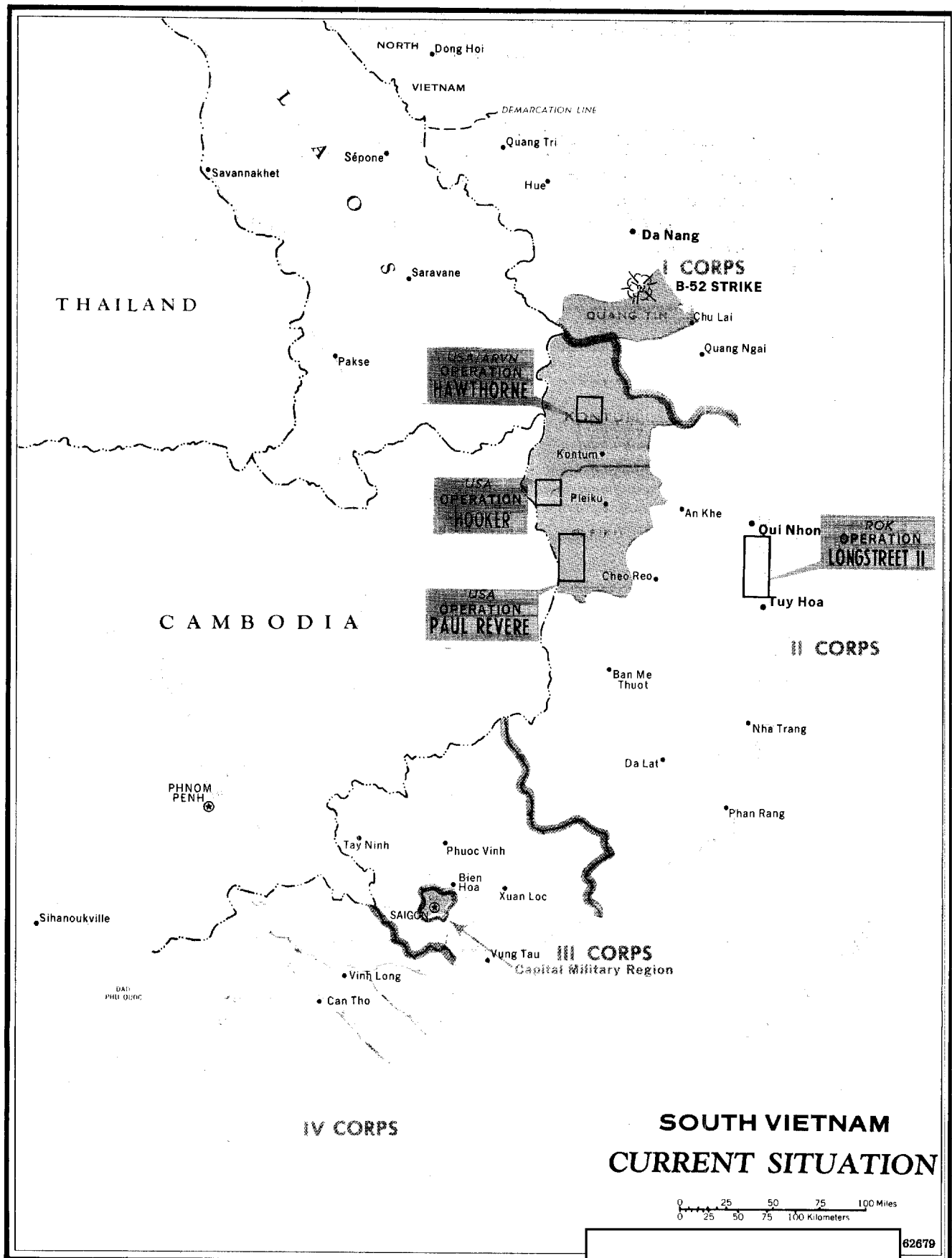
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

25X1

V. Communist Political Developments:

[redacted] Canadian
roving ambassador Ronning has arrived in Hanoi for
his second visit this year (Paras. 2-3). North
Vietnamese politburo member Le Duc Tho talked with
Soviet leader Brezhnev on 14 June (Para. 4).

15 June 1966



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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No major fighting has been reported during the past 24 hours in the 27 battalion-size or larger operations in which allied or Vietnamese forces are involved.

2. In Kontum Province, US troops involved in Operation HAWTHORNE engaged in light contact with remaining elements of the 24th PAVN Regiment. In three brief engagements, 16 of the enemy were reported killed, bringing the total VC/PAVN dead to 533 (US body count). No new US casualties were reported. MACV has commented that the heavy losses experienced by the PAVN 24th Regiment should prevent its participation in any major offensive for another two months.

3. In southern Kontum and Pleiku provinces US forces engaged in Cambodian surveillance Operations HOOKER and REVERE have reported considerable success against units of the PAVN 630th Division. Because this division has sustained casualties of at least 400 killed, it appears that its northeastward movement has been stopped. MACV reports that all indications point to a return of the 630th Division to Cambodian territory.

4. J-2 MACV has commented that the losses inflicted on enemy forces in Operations HAWTHORNE, HOOKER, and REVERE have caused a slowing down of the VC/PAVN monsoon campaign in the central highlands. They add, however, that four enemy regiments in this area have not been involved in a major offensive in the last four months and are in a position to carry on the campaign.

5. In Quang Tin province, 17 B-52 Stratoformers conducted three raids on suspected enemy concentrations 30 miles south of Da Nang. [redacted] three regiments and one artillery battalion of the PAVN 620th Division were massing in preparation for the summer offensive.

15 June 1966

I-1

6. Two battalions of ROK Marines commenced Operation LONGSTREET II on 14 June in an effort to clear National Route 1 between Qui Nhon and Tuy Hoa. Elements of the 95th PAVN regiment and two VC battalions with a combined strength of 3,000 are believed to be in the area.

7. Press reports indicate that a 400-man ARVN reconnaissance battalion made a successful helicopter assault against a VC supply base 60 miles west of Saigon. The reports stated that 11 VC were killed and three captured before surrendering the logistics center located within two miles of the Cambodian border. A spokesman for the ARVN 7th Division said the surprise attack uncovered ten tons of supplies including heavy mortars, recoilless rifles, AA weapons and extensive ammunition caches. The site also contained a signal center, a weapons maintenance shop, and a field hospital connected by 11 concrete tunnels, according to the press.

15 June 1966

I-2

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A rash of minor demonstrations, mostly in the vicinity of the Buddhist Institute, continued in Saigon on 15 June for the third consecutive day. The demonstrations were again broken up by police before they acquired any real momentum. The police reportedly have been making a number of arrests of demonstrators since 13 June, but most detainees have been released after an identity check. Increased numbers of Buddhist altars have appeared on the streets in the vicinity of the Institute. Police are not removing those hindering traffic in the immediate Institute area, presumably in the belief that the situation may provoke some popular antagonism toward the Buddhists who are manning them.

2. Security forces also broke up a rally staged this morning by pro-"struggle" students at Saigon University's Faculty of Medicine, apprehending some 100 student participants who may face immediate induction into the armed forces. During the roundup, a number of newsmen, including Americans, were roughed up by police for taking pictures.

3. The US Embassy reports that the Buddhist Institute late on 15 June issued a communiqué calling for a general strike in Saigon to be carried out on 18, 19, and 20 June. An Institute monk told a US Embassy officer earlier in the day that the recent wave of demonstrations had Institute approval and were being led by monks and nuns, who would take the brunt of police brutality to protect lay followers. This source stated that Tam Chau had left Saigon immediately after issuing his appeal for a removal of altars from thoroughfares and that it was not clear whether subsequent repudiation of Chau's appeal by other Institute leaders could indicate that Chau is no longer Institute chairman.

15 June 1966

II-1

4. The same source confirmed that prominent Buddhist layman Tran Quang Thuan is in hiding from the government, which has ordered his induction into the army despite Thuan's request for exemption. The source also urged the US to find some way to help avoid the death of Tri Quang, whom he termed "essential to the Vietnamese struggle against Communism."

Hue

5. Tri Quang, now ending his first week of fasting in a Hue hospital, is described as in a weak but lucid condition. On 13 June, the aged supreme patriarch Thich Tinh Khiet publicly urged Quang to end his hunger strike, and on 14 June a council of 11 Institute leaders telegraphed him to stop his fast in order to "regain strength to lead the struggle to victory." Tri Quang had previously indicated that, short of forcing the US to abandon support for the Ky government, he would only end his hunger strike under orders from a superior or in response to appeals from other monks. The US Embassy expects that sooner or later he will cite the appeals now being made and call an end to his strike.

6. Several hundred Buddhists in Hue responded to a call for a mass hunger strike on 15 June at their roadside altars. They apparently have not made any concerted effort to block traffic, and police have not moved against them.

Electoral Decrees

7. A Directorate spokesman, Secretary General Pham Xuan Chieu, today held a press conference at which he outlined some of the Directorate's revisions to the recommendations of the election law drafting council. The major changes in the council's draft decrees include a reduction in the number of deputies to the constituent assembly to be elected in September, a reduction in the number of people represented by each deputy, a change from individual candidacies to "list voting," and rejection of the proposal that the assembly have legislative powers.

15 June 1966

8. Chieu indicated that the assembly would total about 120 members instead of 159 as earlier recommended. With provinces and autonomous cities as the basic electoral district, he indicated that there would be a total of 52 districts, with list voting applying in practice in some 25 of them, including Saigon. In these 25 districts two or more representatives would be elected. The population basis per district has been changed from one representative per 100,000 persons to one representative per 50,000 electors--based on an estimated registered vote of 5,122,301, of whom 1,300,000 are in Saigon and surrounding Gia Dinh Province. This change, from a total population to a total registered voter basis, strongly implied that the election will be restricted to essentially secure areas.

9. The purpose of "list voting," which will result in election of more than half of the deputies on a proportional representation basis, is intended, according to Chieu, to encourage the development of political alliances and programs, and to discourage Communist or neutralist infiltration of the assembly. In practice, it could also weaken Buddhist representation in provinces where the latter have a moderate majority.

10. The rejection of any legislative authority for the constituent assembly will result in implementation of the government's idea of further elections, probably in 1967, for a national legislature, according to Chieu's description. In effect, it repudiates earlier Buddhist proposals that the constituent assembly be transformed into a parliament with power to approve or replace the present government, and will probably be seized upon by the Buddhists to justify their present call for a boycott of the September elections. It may also permit the government to dismiss the constituent assembly once it has presented a draft constitution, which could then be subject to government revision without further assembly ratification.

15 June 1966

II-3

III. COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

15 June 1966

1041

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

15 June 1966

IV-1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

25X1

2. Press reports indicate that roving Canadian Ambassador Chester Ronning arrived in Hanoi on 14 June for talks with North Vietnamese leaders. This is Ronning's second trip to North Vietnam this year. His first visit in March was to discuss the ICC role in Vietnam and to deliver the Canadian Government's reply to Ho Chi Minh's 24 January letter to world leaders on the DRV four-point peace proposal. In his discussions with Pham Van Dong at that time, Mr. Ronning is reported to have found the North Vietnamese courteous but insistent that their four-point proposal was the only way to settle the war.

3. According to the AFP report from Hanoi, Mr. Ronning's trip this time is not being given any publicity and although he is expected to discuss recent Canadian proposals for a cease-fire, the press account indicates that the discussions appear to represent only a continuing exchange of views between the two governments.

15 June 1966

V-1

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V-1

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4. North Vietnamese politburo member Le Duc Tho stopped over in Moscow on 14 June for talks with Soviet leaders Brezhnev and Suslov on his way home from attending the Czech party congress. According to a TASS announcement, the three men met in a "fraternal and cordial atmosphere" and exchanged opinions "on a wide range of questions." There was no indication of what specifically was discussed.

15 June 1966

V-2

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